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ELECTRICAL WHOLESALING

ELECTRIC SUPPLY & EQUIPMENT CO. PROMISES PERFORMANCE

PRODUCT LAUNCHES

NEW ENGLAND MARKET

VOLUME 73
NUMBER 1

ELECTRICAL WHOLESALING

JANUARY
1992

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ELECTRICAL
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THE PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Tom Preston was one of the finest men I ever knew. By his example, he kept me centered on a fundamental truth about business; it's people who count—more than companies, more than the latest strategic plan and more than the politics inherent in any enterprise.

In addition, he was a rarity among journalists these days: someone who dedicated an entire career to one industry, and someone who truly loved that industry and the people in it. "I'm a lover, not a fighter," he often said.

That's what Tom said, but we knew it wasn't entirely true. We saw his anger when he felt an injustice was being done to a person or an organization. In those situations he was a fighter. A tireless one. He fought injustice with the same determination he fought the cancer that finally took him.

Tom knew that day would come. In his final years, he and Andrea Herbert focused on developing the skills of the staff that would be the future of ELECTRICAL WHOLESALING and its sister publication *Electrical Marketing* newsletter. Tom and Andrea have done a wonderful job. It's not just me who thinks so: everywhere I travel, I'm complimented that both publications are "better than ever."

We have rededicated ourselves to upholding the traditions of editorial excellence and fairness that were Tom Preston's hallmark. Tom touched all of us. His spirit is alive in each of us and in the magazine he loved—and fought for.

Rich Hathaway

RICH HATHAWAY, Publisher

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from entering the enclosure through this hole.

Now, he will need what is called a "starter." A starter consists of two products—one is a contactor, one is an overload protection. They are sold together as starters, or separately as named so if one wears out at a later date, it can be replaced. But for now, he needs the whole package. He needs a starter.

To get the starter to start and stop the motor, he will need to buy pushbuttons. Pushbuttons come in standard, small and miniature sizes, also round and square, lighted and not lighted, so he will have to decide which he wants. Once he decides, he will order those with the same NEMA rating as his enclosure.

Now, because no human hand can touch anything wired up to three-phase, 220V without the threat of electrocution, the customer must buy a transformer to "step down" the 220V to 110V, so he will also buy a step-down transformer to bring power to the pushbuttons and other control circuitry.

He still has another problem. What if something happens and too much electricity (a spike) comes over the lines? All his equipment will blow up or be damaged. So to prevent that, he will also buy fuses and/or circuit breakers. If he buys fuses, he will also buy fuse holders to mount them in.

In case he needs to cut off the power to work on the equipment in the enclosure someday, he has to buy a disconnect switch. Once all of this is assembled in the enclosure, it is usually referred to as a panel or panel box.

Now that he has bought all this stuff, he has to buy wire to hook up all these things to each other. He also needs terminal blocks to wire all of these devices together, and wiring duct to lay all these wires in so they look neat. He will also need wire or cable to run from the starter to his motor.

As he runs the cable out to the motor, he remembers that there is an electrical safety code—the National Electrical Code—which mandates having a safety switch near the motor to shut it off in case of emergency. He buys that, too.

Finally, everything is hooked up and ready to go. Now he will take out his tool box and tests the line. If he doesn't have the proper test equipment, he will have to purchase that, too.

Finally, all systems are go. He starts his motor. The motor starts and his conveyor jerks into action. All of the machined wooden drumsticks fall to the floor and break. He curses. Now he has to buy something else.

He can buy what is called a "soft-start." He will wire in that product between the motor and starter; and when he pushes the button, his conveyor will start up and stop gradually without knocking off any of the drumsticks. (If he hadn't already purchased his starter, he could have purchased a reduced voltage starter for this application.)

But now, before he buys a soft-start to wire in, he realizes that there will also be times when he wants to slow down the conveyor when it's running and times when he may want to speed it up. So instead of a soft-start, he decides to buy an adjustable frequency controller, also called a variable-frequency drive (VFD). He knows several manufacturers make these, and he will have to find which one best suits his application. He checks them out and buys one.

He takes the starter out of the enclosure and mounts the variable-frequency drive. He puts the starter on the shelf in the storeroom, hoping he can use it somewhere else.

Now he pushes the start button again and runs out to see what happened at the conveyor. After running back and forth from the motor to the enclosure to speed up and slow down the conveyor a couple of times, he decides to put a pushbutton station right next to the conveyor. He has to buy that, too.

That's real basic stuff, Lisa. There are hundreds of other products that customers also buy from us to put inside and outside enclosures. And there is much more to be told about electrical power and how it gets brought from the power company to the wall switch or motor in the plant.

When you would like to know more, I will be glad to expound on it.

Sam's letter explaining electrical terminology and product relationships ultimately increased Lisa's self-confidence. Co-workers noticed. Lisa showed them the letter. Several wanted copies. One salesperson passed it on to a panel builder's receptionist who offhandedly complained of not understanding things. Another gave it to a buyer.

That letter helped keep a valued employee; and it made the company's entire team tougher to beat.

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The names of people and companies mentioned in this article are fictitious. No reference to any real person or company is intended.

ECONOMIC UPDATE

WISHFUL THINKING?

DISTRIBUTORS FROM THE SOUTH SEEM OVERLY OPTIMISITC ABOUT 1992.

■ All across the South, in the 16 states that make up the region, electrical distributors expect a rebound in sales growth in 1992, following a 1991 that most will be glad to put behind them. Three distinct areas make up the South, and in all of them distributors expect their sales to increase at a rate about 5% to 7%. That's right in the same narrow range as the predictions given by other distributors in all areas of the country except New England. (In that recession-ravaged area, distributors hope for a 3.5% gain in 1992.)

Electrical distributors in the southern states along the Atlantic Coast expect business growth in 1992 to be about 7.3%, the highest among wholesalers across the country. This prediction means they hope to offset the estimated drop in sales of -7.5% that occurred in 1991.

The state of Florida dominates this area of the South, with expected sales of $1.7 billion in 1992, representing predicted growth of 7.1%. All other states in this South Atlantic region expect positive growth, from a high of 10.9% in Georgia to a low of 5.3% in West Virginia.

Distributors in Texas, the largest state in the South, expected to have a decent 1992, with an increase in sales of 5.1%. That gain would bring sales for Texas to $3.2 billion in 1992. The states surrounding Texas predicted sales increases, too. For the region including Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma, the outlook is for 5.6% growth in 1992, on the low side among the nine regions that make up the U.S. But that may be the most achievable rate of growth in 1992 put forth by distributors. In these West South Central states, the electrical wholesaling business is coming off a not-so-bad 1991 with an estimated 4.1% growth. That makes it one of only two regions where distributors are not trying to make up 1991 losses in 1992, then to go on to achieve growth on top of that.

In the Deep South, distributors in the states of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee look forward to a better performance in 1992 with a 5.6% increase forecast for the year. In 1991, they were down about 3.9%.

Nationwide, electrical wholesalers

1992 SALES FORECASTS

■ Hope beyond reason?

STATE	DISTRIBUTORS' FORECAST % CHANGE	EW SALES FORECAST ($ millions)
ALABAMA	8.2%	$ 643.2
ARKANSAS	S	308.8
DELAWARE	6.5%	140.0
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	S	S
FLORIDA	7.1%	1,664.9
GEORGIA	10.9%	1,356.8
KENTUCKY	4.2%	416.8
LOUISIANA	1.1%	705.7
MARYLAND	7.6%	702.6
MISSISSIPPI	0.9%	171.6
NORTH CAROLINA	8.1%	1,042.9
OKLAHOMA	S	354.8
SOUTH CAROLINA	0.9%	389.2
TENNESSEE	6.5%	841.4
TEXAS	5.1%	3,211.8
VIRGINIA	8.9%	1,021.9
WEST VIRGINIA	5.3%	205.3

S—insufficient returns

forecast a growth of 5.8% in sales in 1992. If this prediction is on target, it would mean a rebound in growth after a drop in sales in 1991. At the time the survey to gather the forecasts was taken in August of 1991, sales for 1991 were expected to drop by about -3.0%. At that time, the pundits were saying that the recession was over; now it seems little economic improvement has taken place, it leads one to believe that electrical distributors would make different projections for 1992 were the survey done later in the year.

Texas and Florida dominate the South with expected electrical wholesaler sales of $3.2 billion and $1.6 billion, respectively, in 1992. Georgia has been moving up in size and is anticipated to come in at $1.3 billion, followed by Virginia and North Carolina, each at $1.0 billion. The South has three of the top ten states for electrical distributor sales: No. 2 Texas, No. 5 Florida and No. 9 Georgia.

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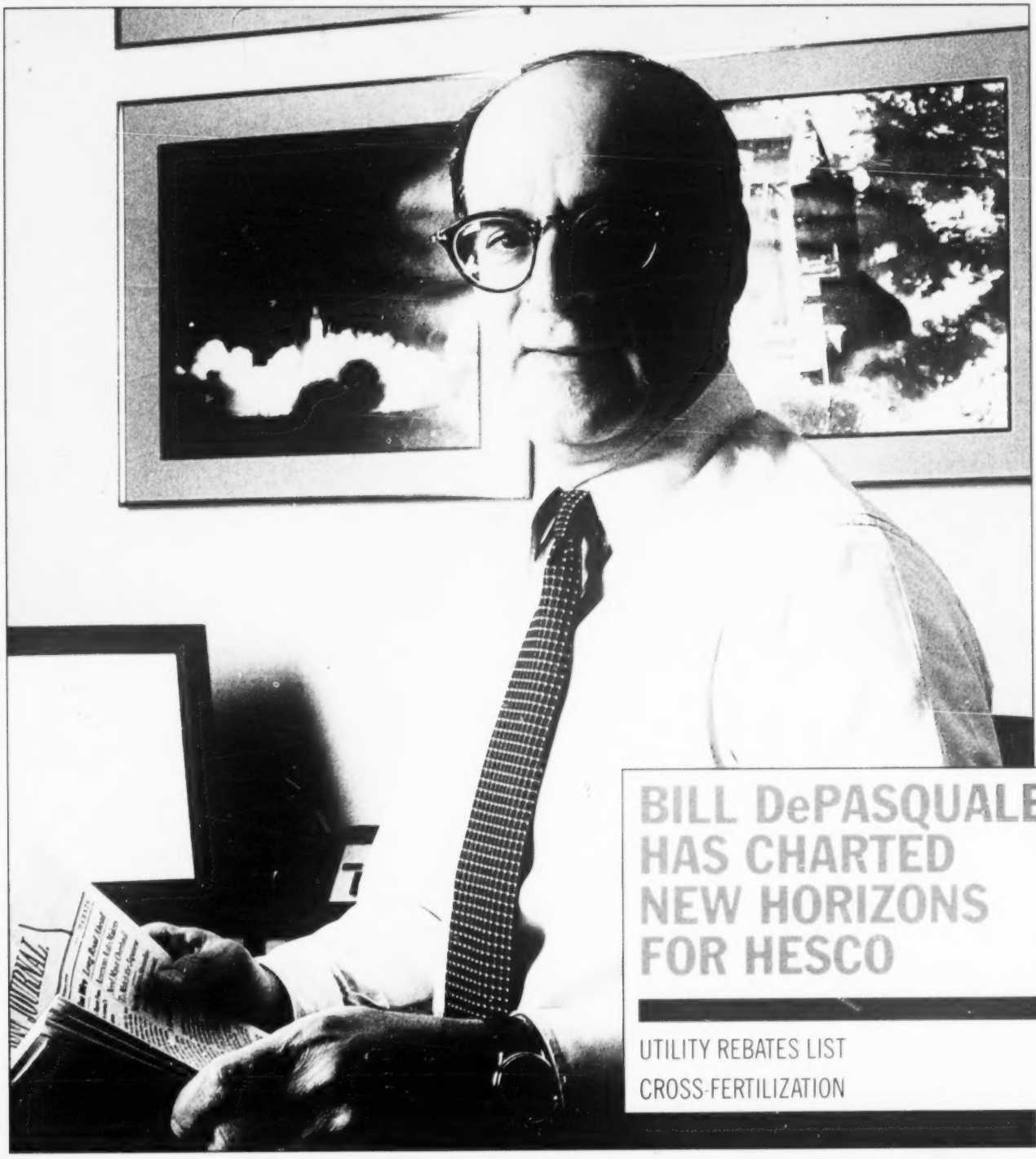

BILL DePASQUALE HAS CHARTED NEW HORIZONS FOR HESCO

UTILITY REBATES LIST

CROSS-FERTILIZATION

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1992

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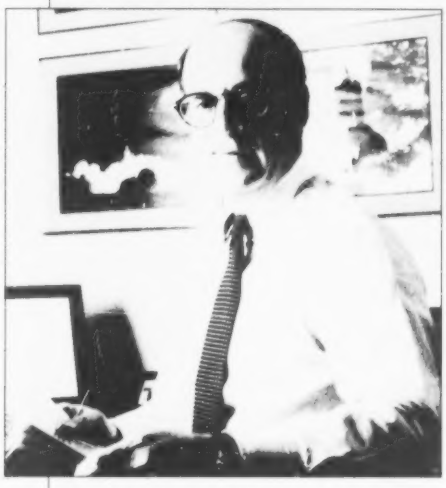

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Hiring employees with experience from outside the electrical wholesaling industry can bring a fresh perspective to the business.

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Every customer has psychological needs that must be met before a sale takes place.

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This month, our ABCs of electrical equipment covers grounding accessories.

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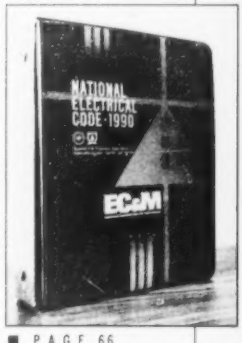

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THE PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A speaker at a recent NAED regional meeting urged his audience to attempt a "paradigm shift." Look beyond not only the traditional ways you do things, even look beyond the traditional ways you *think* about things, he urged. Don't be constrained by past history, the conventional wisdom, or what is expected.

That could well be the theme of this issue. You will find original thinking in several of the stories:

• Fox Electric Supply in Philadelphia saw more and more electrical contractors shopping at home centers. So they set up three branches with supermarket-style aisles instead of traditional counters, credit card payments, debit cards, and evening and weekend hours. (See "Electrical Supermarket," beginning on page 51.)

• For years Hartford Electrical Supply did 85% of its volume with OEMs. The manufacturing slump in New England threatened that. So HESCO had to rethink the way they were doing business. The results, reported in "HESCO's Revolution," beginning on page 23, include a renewed focus on the more profitable customers, hiring a different mix of people to serve the MRO market, carefully monitoring the effects of macroeconomic trends on local customers, and restructuring the company to better serve its new customer mix.

The speaker at the NAED meeting was right about the need for a paradigm shift. But that doesn't come easy. Part of our mission at ELECTRICAL WHOLESALING is to comb the country for the more innovative ideas and share them with you. You'll find several borrowable ideas in this issue.

Rich Hathaway

RICH HATHAWAY, Publisher

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ECONOMIC UPDATE

EAST IN CRISIS

ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS IN THE EAST HOPE 1992 PROVES A TURNING POINT.

■ For electrical distributors in New England and the Middle Atlantic states, it must seem as if they've been down so long that there is no way but up. Markets have been at a virtual standstill for well over a year. Nonetheless, with what may be the triumph of hope over reality, distributors in the area are predicting modest improvement in business in 1992.

For much of the 1980s, business was booming along for electrical distributors in the East. The tide began to turn in 1989, however. Then came 1990, with full-blown economic recession in New England and deteriorating business conditions in the Middle Atlantic states. By 1991, some in New England were calling the situation a depression. In our survey taken in August of 1991, distributors in New England were saying 1991 would be down 4.3%, while those in the Middle Atlantic states were anticipating a 0.2% drop for the year.

At that time, Eastern distributors were hoping that 1992 would improve their situations. New England distributors predict a rebound of +3.5% growth in sales in 1992, while those in the Middle Atlantic states forecast a +6.2% performance. It is likely that the predictions look the way they do for two reasons: First, because they are made by the survivors. A number of firms have gone out of business (especially in New England) which has the effect of stabilizing the situation for those that remain. Some companies may be holding steady or seeing an uptick in business because they are picking up the customers of the companies that have closed their doors.

The second reason the predictions may seem overly positive is the timing of the survey, which was taken in the summer of 1991. At that time, the pundits were saying that the recession was over; now the talk is of a "double-dip" recession. It leads one to believe that electrical distributors would have reacted to the economic climate and made different projections for 1992 were the survey done later in the year or early this year.

Nationwide, electrical wholesalers forecast 5.8% growth in 1992. If this prediction is on target, it would mean an upturn in growth after a drop in 1991, which was expected to come in at -3.0%.

The East Coast states are a contrast in very large and very small. Among the nine states in this area are four of the smallest states in the country in terms of electrical distributor sales (Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Maine) and three of the largest (New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania). □

1992 SALES FORECASTS

■ The East: hope burns on

STATE	DISTRIBUTORS' FORECAST % CHANGE	EW SALES FORECAST ($ millions)
CONNECTICUT	+2.9%	$633.4
MAINE	S	118.9
MASSACHUSETTS	+3.6%	986.0
NEW HAMPSHIRE	S	121.2
NEW JERSEY	+6.1%	1,561.3
NEW YORK	+5.4%	3,123.9
PENNSYLVANIA	+6.7%	1,680.2
RHODE ISLAND	S	97.2
VERMONT	S	72.8

S—insufficient returns

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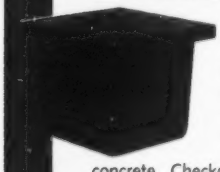

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Type DF Expansion Fittings-Used for linear expansion and contraction of rigid metal and IMC conduit and for dampening vibrations between two sections of conduit. Also used for angular misalignment up to 30°.

** Watertight * Weatherproof * UL Listed*

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